

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-06 ACDA-07 IO-13 DHA-02 MCT-01 /079 W
-----131535Z 055399 /50

R 131322Z APR 77
FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3641
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BEIRUT 1657

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR PINT LE SY
SUBJ: THE LEFT WITH WALID JUNBLATT

1. SUMMARY: WALID JUNBLATT IS BEGINNING A POLITICAL CAREER. ALREADY ACCEPTED AS HEAD OF THE JUNBLATTI DRUZES, HE HAS BEEN OFFERED THE PRESIDENCY OF HIS FATHER'S POPULAR SOCIALIST PARTY (PSP) AND APPEARS INCLINED TO ACCEPT IT. HE WOULD PURSUE A DISTINCTLY DIFFERENT POLITICAL COURSE FROM THAT OF HIS FATHER IN RECENT YEARS: HE WOULD SEEK RAPPROCHEMENT WITH THE SYRIANS, TIGHTEN DISCIPLINE WITHIN THE NATIONAL MOVEMENT (NM), BRING PRO-SYRIAN LEFTIST ELEMENTS INTO THE NM, AND LOOK FOR WAYS TO CHECK COMMUNIST INFLUENCE. HE HAS BEGUN A DIALOG WITH MODERATE MARONITE LEADERS. HE APPEARS MORE INTERESTED AT PRESENT IN THE WELFARE OF THE DRUZE COMMUNITY THAN IN LEFTIST IDEOLOGY. HIS IDEOLOGICAL ORIENTATION REMAINS UNCLEAR, BUT HE HAS A PRAGMATIC APPROACH TO CURRENT ISSUES. HE FULLY SUPPORTS THE NATIONAL UNIFICATION
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EFFORTS OF THE SARKIS GOVERNMENT. HE MAY PLAY A KEY ROLE IN FACILITATING THE LEFTIST END OF A PROCESS OF NATIONAL POLITICAL RECONCILIATION. END SUMMARY.

2. FOLLOWING ANALYSIS OF WALID JUNBLATT'S CURRENT ROLE AND POSSIBLE IMPACT ON LEBANESE LEFTIST POLITICS IS BASED ON A VARIETY OF SOURCES, PARTICULARLY AN EMBOFF CALL ON HIM

AT WHAT WAS HIS FATHER'S HOUSE IN MOUSSEITBE, WEST BEIRUT,
APRIL 11. BIOGRAPHIC REPORT IN SEPTTEL.

3. WALID'S POLITICAL FUTURE. AL BAYRAQ REPORTED MARCH 31 THAT WALID HAD INITIALLY REFUSED TO GET INVOLVED IN PARTY POLITICS, BUT HAD CHANGED HIS MIND BECAUSE HE FEARED A SPLIT IN LEFTIST RANKS AFTER HIS FATHER'S DEATH. WALID NOW SAYS HE IS CONSIDERING ACCEPTING THE LEADERSHIP OF BOTH THE PSP AND OF THE NATIONAL MOVEMENT, BUT HAD NOT YET MADE A FINAL DECISION. A NEW CHAIRMAN OF THE PSP WILL NOT BE FORMALLY CHOSEN UNTIL THE END OF MAY. WALID WAS MADE A "GUIDING MEMBER" OF THE PSP ON MARCH 23, IS WIDELY EXPECTED IN LEFTIST CIRCLES TO ACCEPT THE PSP LEADERSHIP, AND HAD BEEN OPENLY ENDORSED AS LEADER OF THE NM BY NASSERIST LEADER IBRAHIM QULAYLAT. HE HAS BEEN ACTIVELY PARTICIPATING IN MEETINGS OF THE NM AND PSP LEADERSHIP, AND HAS BEEN REPORTED AS PRESIDING AT PSP MEETINGS.

4. DEALING WITH THE SYRIANS. WALID SAYS HE BELIEVES IT NECESSARY TO ESTABLISH CONTACT WITH THE SYRIAN AUTHORITIES. IN ADDITION TO THE OFFICIAL SYRIAN DELEGATION WHICH PAID CONDOLENCES AT MUKHATARA SHORTLY AFTER THE ASSASSINATION, WALID SAID HE HAS RECEIVED A GREAT NUMBER OF SYRIAN EMISSARIES. HE MIGHT VISIT DAMASCUS HIMSELF, BUT COULD NOT FOR NOW, GIVEN LINGERING SUSPICIONS THAT THE SYRIANS WERE BEHIND THE ASSASSINATION. ACCORDING TO SAMI MAKSSAD, A JOURNALIST AND CLOSE FRIEND OF WALID'S, HE LACKS HIS FATHER'S "COMPLEXES" ABOUT SYRIAN INTERVENTION IN LEBANON.

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5. SHIFTING THE ORIENTATION OF THE NATIONAL MOVEMENT. WALID TOLD EMBOFF THAT, IN ORDER TO MAINTAIN THE EXISTING FOREIGN ARAB SUPPORT FOR THE VARIOUS PARTIES IN THE NATIONAL MOVEMENT, IT IS NECESSARY THAT THE MOVEMENT BECOME MORE MODERATE. HE SAID THE MOVEMENT LEADERSHIP RIGHT NOW IS CONSIDERING "WHAT TO DO" ABOUT THE COMMUNIST PARTIES IN THE MOVEMENT, AND MIGHT MAKE SOME DECISION THIS WEEK, BUT HE STOPPED SHORT OF SAYING THEY MIGHT BE EXPELLED FROM THE MOVEMENT. FAWZI SHALQ, A WRITER WITH WIDE NATIONAL MOVEMENT CONNECTIONS, HAS TOLD US THAT WALID WOULD SEEK TO INSTILL TIGHTER DISCIPLINE AS LEADER OF THE NM. WALID SAYS HE IS LOOKING FOR A WAY TO BRING INTO THE NATIONAL MOVEMENT PROGRESSIVE GROUPS OF A PRO-SYRIAN PERSUASION, INCLUDING SPECIFICALLY THE BAATH PARTY OF ASSEM KANSO AND THE "NATIONAL FRONT" OF KAMEL SHATILA. BOTH OF THESE PARTIES HAD BEEN PART OF THE NATIONAL MOVEMENT, BUT WERE EXPELLED WHEN THE NM OPPOSED SYRIAN INTERVENTION IN LEBANON IN EARLY 1976. WALID'S CONCERN COULD BE MOTIVATED BY RUMORS OF A MORE CENTRIST NON-CHRISTIAN FRONT WHICH WOULD UNITE THE PRO-SYRIAN LEFTISTS WITH TRADI-

TIONAL MOSLEM LEADERS SUCH AS RACHID KARAME AND MALIK SALAM AND TRADITIONAL DRUZE LEADERS SUCH AS MAJID ARSELAN. HOWEVER, A JUNBLATT FAMILY MEMBER TOLD AN EMBASSY EMPLOYEE IN LATE MARCH THAT ARSELAN HAD ALSO PROPOSED A POLITICAL ALLIANCE WITH WALID.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 BEIRUT 1657

6. TALKING TO THE CHRISTIANS AND PALESTINIANS. WALID HAS BEEN IN CONTACT WITH VARIOUS PHALANGE LEADERS, INCLUDING AMINE GEMAYEL AND KARIM PAKRADOUNI, AND IMPLIED TO EMBOFF THAT HE MIGHT SOON SEE PIERRE GEMAYEL. WITH THESE IT IS POSSIBLE TO TALK, HE SAYS, BUT ANY DIALOG WITH THE CHAMOUNS OR WITH BECHIR GEMAYEL WOULD BE FUTILE. AT THE SAME TIME, HE IS KEEPING GOOD RELATIONS WITH THE PALESTINIAN LEADERSHIP, AND HAS MET AT LEAST TWICE WITHIN THE LAST TWO WEEKS WITH YASSIR ARAFAT AND ABOU IYAD.

7. OPPOSES PARTITION, SUPPORTS SARKIS. WALID CLEARLY OPPOSES PARTITION, AND JUST AS CLEARLY BELIEVES THAT MANY CHRISTIANS WANT PRECISELY THAT. HE IS PARTICULARLY WORRIED THAT CHRISTIAN PARTITION EFFORTS WOULD DISRUPT THE LIFE OF THE DRUZE COMMUNITY IN THE CHOUF. HE NOTED THAT DRUZES HAD BEEN SYSTEMATICALLY DRIVEN OUT OF A NUMBER OF VILLAGES IN THE METN BY CHRISTIANS, AND THEIR HOUSES BURNED TO THE GROUND. HE IS CONCERNED ABOUT THE FUTURE OF THE DRUZE

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COMMUNITY IN LEBANON AND NOTED THAT THEY, TOO, HAD COME TO LEBANON FROM ELSEWHERE IN THE PAST AS REFUGEES. THE DRUZE COMMUNITY COULD NOT SURVIVE IN A PARTITIONED LEBANON. TO PRESERVE LEBANESE NATIONAL UNITY, A STRONG ARMY WAS ESSENTIAL. HE TOLD EMBOFF HE REGARDS THE RECONSTITUTION OF THE ARMY AS THE KEY TO LEBANON'S SURVIVAL. HE COULD CERTAINLY LIVE WITH "ADMINISTRATIVE DECENTRALIZATION," NOTING THAT IT NEED NOT LEAD TO "POLITICAL DECENTRALIZATION," AND FULLY SUPPORTS THE SARKIS GOVERNMENT IN ITS EFFORTS TO REESTABLISH THE LEBANESE STATE, WHICH MUST BE SUCCESSFUL BEFORE ANYTHING ELSE CAN BE ACCOMPLISHED.

8. KAMAL JUNBLATT AND EGYPTIAN PROMISES. WALID SAID HIS FATHER HAD RECEIVED UNEQUIVOCAL PROMISES OF DIRECT EGYPTIAN MILITARY INTERVENTION IN LEBANON IN MID-1976 TO OFFSET THE SYRIAN INTERVENTION. THE EGYPTIANS HAD RENEGED ON THEIR PROMISES.

9. THE ASSASSINATION OF KAMAL JUNBLATT. WALID SAID HE SIMPLY HAD NO FIRM INFORMATION ON WHO KILLED HIS FATHER. HE SEEMED CONFIDENT THAT THE GOL WAS INDEED DOING EVERYTHING POSSIBLE TO INVESTIGATE THE CASE.

10. COMMENT: WALID COMES ACROSS AS A LEVEL-HEADED ANALYST OF EVENTS. WHILE IMPLICITLY SUPPORTING THE PROGRESSIVE IDEALS OF THE LEFT, WHEN SPEAKING WITH EMBOFF HE DID NOT ONCE USE MARXIST FORMULATIONS, OR SPEAK OF "THE REVOLUTION." HE HAS THE NON-IDEOLOGICAL COMMUNITY INTERESTS OF THE DRUZES MUCH MORE IN MIND. HIS APPROACH IS CLEARLY PRAGMATIC, STARTING WITH THE REALITIES OF THE SYRIAN PRESENCE, THE ARAB LEAGUE SUPPORT OF THAT PRESENCE, AND THE PRIMARY IMPORTANCE OF REESTABLISHMENT OF A LEBANESE STATE, WITHOUT PARTICULAR REFERENCE AT THIS TIME TO THE IDEOLOGICAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL ASPECTS OF HOW THAT STATE OUGHT TO BE ORGANIZED FOR THE FUTURE. PROVIDED HE AVOIDS EXCESSIVE COOPTATION BY THE MORE RADICAL ELEMENTS OF THE LEFT, HE MAY BE BOTH READY AND

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ABLE TO PLAY A CONSTRUCTIVE ROLE IN A NATIONAL POLITICAL DIALOG. PARKER

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Message Attributes

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TAGS: PFOR, PINT, LE, SY, (JUMBLATT, WALID)
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